

# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

## FLOOR AMENDMENT

TO

2023 -- S 0077

### AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PILOT PROGRAM ACT

Mr. President:

1 I hereby move to amend 2023 -- S 0077, entitled "AN ACT RELATING TO  
2 EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PILOT PROGRAM ACT", as  
3 follows:

4 1. By deleting all of the language after the enactment clause and inserting in place thereof  
5 the following:

6 "SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended  
7 by adding thereto the following chapter:

#### CHAPTER 112

#### RHODE ISLAND HOPE SCHOLARSHIP PILOT PROGRAM ACT

##### **16-112-1. Short title.**

11 This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Rhode Island Hope Scholarship  
12 Pilot Program Act".

##### **16-112-2. Legislative findings and purpose.**

14 (a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

15 (1) Education is critical for the state's young people to achieve their aspirations and  
16 develop their talents;

17 (2) The state's economic success depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce;

18 (3) The state's future prosperity depends upon its ability to make educational  
19 opportunities beyond high school available for all students;

20 (4) The coronavirus has inflicted undue hardships on students and their families, creating  
21 barriers to a four (4) year college degree;

1           (5) A merit-based tuition reduction program will help make a four (4) year college degree  
2 available to all students;

3           (6) Rhode Island college offers students a feasible opportunity to obtain a four (4) year  
4 degree, but remains an underutilized resource in the state; and

5           (7) The State of Rhode Island's motto is "Hope".

6           (b) In order to address the findings set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the purpose  
7 of this chapter is to increase the number of students enrolling in and completing four (4) year  
8 degrees and certificates on time from Rhode Island college, and to promote more graduates in  
9 high-need fields such as nursing, pre-k through grade twelve (12) education, and the trades,  
10 which are fields for which Rhode Island college provides a strong and affordable education.

11           (c) The purpose of the pilot program is also to determine whether a scholarship program  
12 for Rhode Island college that is modeled on the promise scholarship program established in  
13 chapter 107 of title 16 would be successful in attaining the goals set forth in this section."

14           **16-112-3. Establishment of scholarship program.**

15           There is hereby established the Rhode Island hope scholarship pilot program. The general  
16 assembly shall annually appropriate the funds necessary to implement the purposes of this chapter  
17 for the periods of the pilot program. Additional funds beyond the scholarships may be  
18 appropriated to support and advance the Rhode Island hope scholarship pilot program. In addition  
19 to appropriation by the general assembly, charitable donations may be accepted into the  
20 scholarship program.

21           **16-112-4. Definitions.**

22           When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

23           (1) "ADA" means the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., as may  
24 be amended from time to time.

25           (2) "Certificate" means any certificate program with labor market value as defined by the  
26 postsecondary commissioner.

27           (3) "College-level credit" means credit awarded by a college or university for completion  
28 of its own courses or other academic work.

29           (4) "FAFSA" means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form.

30           (5) "General education coursework" means the educational foundation of knowledge,  
31 skills, and attitudes that prepare students for success in their majors and their personal and  
32 professional lives after graduation. It includes, but is not limited to, the required coursework of all  
33 degrees developed by each eligible postsecondary institution that is approved by the council on  
34 postsecondary education that is intended to ensure that all graduates of a state institution have a

balanced core of competencies and knowledge. This does not necessarily include coursework specifically required for one's major.

(6) "Mandatory fees and tuition" means the costs that every student is required to pay in order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel.

(7) "On track to graduate on time" means the standards determined by Rhode Island college in establishing the expectation of a student to graduate with a bachelor's degree within four (4) years of enrollment, or the prescribed completion time for a student completing a certificate (recognizing that some students, including students who require developmental education, are double majors, or are enrolled in certain professional programs may require an extended time period for degree completion).

(8) "Reasonable accommodations" means any necessary modifications or adjustment to a facility, equipment, program, or manner of operation as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 791, as may be amended from time to time;

(10) "Recipient student" means a student attending Rhode Island college who qualifies to receive the Rhode Island hope scholarship pursuant to § 16-112-6.

(9) "Pilot program" and "scholarship program" means the Rhode Island hope scholarship pilot program that is established pursuant to § 16-112-3.

(11) "State" means the State of Rhode Island.

(12) "Student with a disability" means any student otherwise eligible pursuant to this chapter who has a physical, developmental, or hidden disability or disabilities, as defined in § 42-87-1, that would create a hardship or other functional obstacles preventing participation in this program.

**16-112-5. Administration of scholarship program.**

(a) The financial aid office at Rhode Island college, in conjunction with the admissions office or their respective equivalent offices at Rhode Island college, shall administer the scholarship program for state residents seeking bachelor's degrees and/or certificates who meet the eligibility requirements in this chapter.

(b) An award of the scholarship program shall cover the cost of up to two (2) years of tuition and mandatory fees, for the junior and senior years of the student, or in the case of an adult student, who has attained at least sixty (60) credit hours, then the award may cover tuition and mandatory fees over a duration of not more than two (2) years. In all instances, these awards shall be reduced by the amount of federal and all other financial aid monies available to the recipient

1 student. None of any grants received by students from the department of children, youth and  
2 families' higher education opportunity incentive grant as established by chapter 72.8 of title 42 or  
3 the college crusade scholarship act as established in chapter 70 of title 16 shall be considered  
4 federal or financial aid for the purposes of this chapter.

5 (c) The scholarship program is limited to one award per student as required by § 16-112-  
6 6(a)(7); provided that, the award may cover the two (2) years which constitute the junior and  
7 senior years of the student, or the two (2) years for an adult student, and may be dispersed in  
8 separate installments.

9 **16-112-6. Eligibility for merit based tuition reduction scholarship at Rhode Island**  
10 **college.**

11 (a) Beginning with the students who enrolled at Rhode Island college in the fall of 2023,  
12 a student:

13 (1) Must qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by  
14 the council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise  
15 modified from time to time ("residency policy");

16 (2) Must be a currently enrolled full-time student who has declared a major and earned a  
17 minimum of sixty (60) total credit hours towards an eligible program of study, as determined by  
18 Rhode Island college;

19 (3) Must complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification by the deadline  
20 prescribed by Rhode Island college for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding  
21 under the scholarship program; provided that, persons who are legally unable to complete the  
22 FAFSA must complete a comparable form created by Rhode Island college, by the deadline  
23 prescribed by Rhode Island college, for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding  
24 under the scholarship program;

25 (4) Must enroll or have enrolled full-time as a freshman as a first-time student and  
26 continue to be enrolled on a full-time basis at Rhode Island college, by the dates indicated within  
27 this chapter;

28 (5) Must maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or  
29 greater, as determined by Rhode Island college, prior to obtaining the scholarship and also as a  
30 condition of being able to continue to be a scholarship recipient;

31 (6) Must remain on track to graduate on time as determined by Rhode Island college and  
32 must complete both the student's freshman and sophomore years at Rhode Island college, or in  
33 the case of an adult student, have completed sixty (60) credit hours of tuition and mandatory fees  
34 at Rhode Island college over a duration of no more than four (4) years;

1           (7) Must not have already received an award under this program or under chapter 107 of  
2 title 16; and

3           (8) Must commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after  
4 graduation.

5           (b) Rhode Island college, in conjunction with the office of the postsecondary  
6 commissioner, shall develop a policy that will secure the commitment set forth in subsection (a)  
7 of this section from recipient students.

8           (c) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section  
9 ("specified conditions"):

10           (1) In the case of a recipient student who has an approved medical or personal leave of  
11 absence or is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because of the student's medical  
12 or personal circumstances, the student may continue to receive an award under the scholarship  
13 program upon resuming the student's education so long as the student continues to meet all other  
14 applicable eligibility requirements;

15           (2) In the case of a recipient student who is a member of the national guard or a member  
16 of a reserve unit of a branch of the United States military and is unable to satisfy one or more  
17 specified conditions because the student is or will be in basic or special military training, or is or  
18 will be participating in a deployment of the student's guard or reserve unit, the student may  
19 continue to receive an award under the scholarship program upon completion of the student's  
20 basic or special military training or deployment; and

21           (3) Students enrolled in Rhode Island college as of July 1, 2021, who have attained junior  
22 status at Rhode Island college as of July 1, 2023, or who enrolled in Rhode Island college as of  
23 July 1, 2022, and who have attained junior status at Rhode Island college as of July 1, 2024, and  
24 who are otherwise in compliance with this chapter, shall be eligible for a hope scholarship under  
25 this chapter.

26           (4) Any student with a disability, otherwise eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the  
27 provisions of this section, shall be entitled to access this program and shall be afforded all  
28 reasonable accommodations, as required by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973,  
29 including, but not limited to, enrolling on a part-time basis and taking longer than four (4) years  
30 to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

31           (d) The decision of whether or not a student has attained junior or senior status by the  
32 appropriate date shall be determined by the appropriate body of Rhode Island college, subject to  
33 the rules, regulations, and procedures established pursuant to § 16-112-8.

34           **16-112-7. Reporting and disbursement.**

1           (a) On or before November 10, 2023, and on or before November 10 thereafter for every  
2 year through and including calendar year 2028, Rhode Island college shall submit a report to the  
3 director of the office of management and budget, the state budget officer, the house fiscal advisor,  
4 the senate fiscal advisor, the commissioner of postsecondary education, and the chair of the  
5 council on postsecondary education, a report detailing the following:

- 6           (1) The number of students eligible to participate in the scholarship program;  
7           (2) The amount of federal and institutional financial aid anticipated to be received by  
8 recipient students;  
9           (3) The aggregate tuition and mandatory fee costs attributable to recipient students;  
10          (4) The resulting total cost of the scholarship program to the state; and  
11          (5) The report shall contain such data for both the current fiscal year and the most up-to-  
12 date forecast for the following fiscal year. Data reported shall be subdivided by student-year  
13 cohort and shall be accompanied by a written explanation detailing the estimating methodology  
14 utilized and any impact(s) the forecasted data may present to institutional capacity, operational  
15 costs, and the tuition/fee revenue base of the institution.

16          (b) On or before July 1, 2024, and on before July 1 thereafter for every year until through  
17 and including calendar year 2028, Rhode Island college, in conjunction with the office of the  
18 postsecondary commissioner, shall submit a report evaluating the program to the governor,  
19 speaker of the house, and the president of the senate. This evaluation shall include the following:

- 20          (1) The number of students who started in each cohort;  
21          (2) The number of students in each cohort who have attained a degree or certification in  
22 an on-time manner;  
23          (3) The number of students in each cohort who have not attained a degree or certification  
24 in an on-time manner and an analysis of why that has happened;  
25          (4) The number of students in each cohort who began the program but have been unable  
26 to continue or complete the program and an analysis of why that has happened;  
27          (5) The costs of the program and the costs of continuing the program;  
28          (6) Suggestions for ways to increase the success of the program;  
29          (7) Recommendations as to modifying, continuing, expanding, curtailing, or  
30 discontinuing the program; and  
31          (8) Any such other recommendations or information as Rhode Island college and the  
32 commissioner of postsecondary education deem appropriate to include in the evaluation.

33          (c) The office of management and budget, in consultation with the office of the  
34 postsecondary commissioner, shall oversee the apportionment and disbursement of all funds

1     appropriated for the purpose of the scholarship program.

2             **16-112-8. Rules, regulations, and procedures.**

3             The council on postsecondary education is hereby authorized to promulgate rules and  
4 regulations to effectuate the purposes of this chapter, including, but not limited to, the residency  
5 policy, and Rhode Island college shall establish appeal procedures for the award, denial, or  
6 revocation of funding under the scholarship program. The rules and regulations shall be  
7 promulgated in accordance with § 16-59-4.

8             **16-112-9. Applicability to current students.**

9             Currently enrolled students at Rhode Island college who have attained junior status as of  
10 July 1, 2023, or July 1, 2024, and who otherwise meet the requirements of this chapter, shall be  
11 eligible for a hope scholarship under this chapter.

12            **16-112-10. Funding of and sunset of pilot program.**

13            The Rhode Island hope scholarship pilot program shall be funded from July 1, 2023,  
14 through and including July 1, 2028. There shall be no further funding of the pilot program  
15 without further action of the general assembly. Any final reports due pursuant to this chapter shall  
16 be filed pursuant to the dates set forth herein.

17            SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage."

Respectfully submitted,

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SENATOR PEARSON

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